



Inside CFSA

For Our Child-Serving Community

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Social Work Staff Reaches High of 277

Licensed social workers at CFSA reached 277 on June 30, and the average caseload per worker dropped to a low of 22 last week. These are major milestones in the agency's effort to recruit and retain key staff who directly affect the safety, permanence, and well being of children and families.



Since January, CFSA has been following a new recruitment plan that includes both traditional and innovative strategies for attracting and keeping qualified social workers. Chief Recruiter Norma Hatot is in charge of targeting licensed masters- and bachelors-level

social work graduates at local and distant colleges and universities. Methods include participation in on-site career fairs, follow-up telephone calls, mass mailings to students and alumni, electronic messages, and use of Internet job sites.

Peak Recruitment Season

"We're currently in the midst of intensive summer recruitment," Hatot said. "The word is out! The phones are ringing consistently as offers are made and accepted everyday."

So far, local colleges and universities and selected social work programs around the country have yielded the best results for CFSA. Recruiting at regional job fairs and advertising positions via print ads and Internet services have also been successful. Social work conferences have been less rewarding.

"While we've made important progress toward achieving CFSA's recruitment goal of 310 and believe we can meet it, it won't be easy," Hatot stated. "Recruitment only represents half the battle; retention is equally important. We look forward to the entire agency embracing both recruitment and retention and serving as ongoing ambassadors."

Licensing Necessary

National statistics show that state child welfare agencies typically experience a 20 percent turnover rate in social work staff annually. While CFSA turnover of 17 percent among licensed social workers is slightly lower, we are working to staff up, so any attrition hurts. CFSA has focused on retention of trainees, who are BSW or MSW graduates hired pending licensure, as well as on lowering caseloads and training supervisors. Last year, CFSA found that many trainees were unable to pass the licensure exam within the 90 days required by policy. This year, Hatot and her recruitment team are turning to "Plan B," which involves:

- Working with schools to encourage students to take the licensing exam before they graduate.
- Encouraging applicants to take the licensing exam, or at least obtain a test date, before joining CFSA.

Individual Caseloads Dropping

As a direct result of both recruiting more workers and increased management attention to assignments, CFSA caseloads have recently dropped to 22 cases per worker, on average. Currently, only 13 CFSA workers have more than 30 cases. Just a year ago, 35 workers had over 40 cases.

Youth Development Honors Foster Teen Achievers



Every child who does well in school should get a pat on the back. Foster kids, who must overcome a series of unusual hurdles to succeed, deserve special recognition. Each year, CFSA Youth Development honors foster teen achievers at an event sponsored by the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence program. This year, 30 percent of 71 high school graduates received academic achievement awards. In addition, 60 foster youth are currently in college. Following are profiles of three young people who were among the group CFSA honored at a luncheon July 19.

Dorothy, 21, recently obtained an associates degree in cooking and baking. After taking her child to day care each morning, she commuted to Baltimore via the MARC train, often getting to classes as early as 7 a.m. In the fall, she plans to attend a four-year college to pursue degrees in business administration and culinary arts.

After being on probation throughout his first year of college, **Damian** turned his life around. Having just completed his third year at Hampton University, Damien, 20, is now consistently making the Dean's List. He is working as an intern with the State Department this summer and contemplating law school. Last spring, Damien told a Senate committee that support from workers at CFSA was instrumental in keeping him in college.

Despite severe disabilities, **Patina** maintained an "A" average in high school while studying courses such as geometry and Spanish. Now 21, she is learning to play the piano and planning to continue lessons while attending Prince Georges Community College this fall. ■

CFSA Public Information faxes this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To provide comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-6015. Editor: Derek Stewart ■